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CHAPTER III

STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY

SETTLERS AND NOMADS

621 619 101 829 The Rwala divide human beings into *ḥaḍar*, or those who dwell in permanent houses, and *'arab*, or those who dwell in movable tents. Arab, therefore, is the name given throughout the desert to the inhabitant of a black tent only. The phrase is used: "*'Arabna raḥalow, 'arabna nazalow*; our Arabs have removed, our Arabs have encamped," in reference to members of the same kin (see below, pp. 48f.). The *'arab al-ṭebîla* are members of the same tribe. *'Arab ad-dîra* is the common name of the nomads who are found in the tilled areas and on their borders, irrespective of the tribe to which they belong. The word *'orbên* expresses membership of various clans or tribes. *'Orbên 'ala ḍmejr* denotes that in the environs of Dmejr are encamped members of various clans and tribes. If the herdsmen or hunters meet an unknown nomad in their territory, they inquire: "*Ent min ên jê wuled*, where art thou from, man?" If he says: "*Min hal-'arab*, from these Arabs," they ask: "*Fâhmîn enwak min al-'arab mâr min ajj al-'orbên*, we know that thou art from the Arabs; but from which of the various Arabs?"

621 221 342 The dwellers in houses, *ḥaḍar*, are divided into *ḥaḍûrne* (the individual is known as *ḥaḍrawêni*), or those who never leave their permanent dwelling, and *ra'w* (or *ra'ijje*), or those who change from their permanent dwellings during the rainy season to movable tents. After the sowing of crops in the autumn, the *ra'w* or *ra'ijje* leave their villages and with their flocks of goats and sheep make their way into the steppe, where they dwell both in black goat's-hair tents and in gray tents of cotton fabric. At the end of April and in May, when the harvest is near, they return from the steppe to their houses.

101 233 The Arabs consist of Bedouins and *ḥwêja* (or *ḥêjên*). The *ḥwêja* have two things black, *leḥom swêdîn*, black tents of goat's hair and flocks of black goats and sheep. These flocks

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do not permit them to go into the interior of the desert, *mâ jeḥarreżûn*. They are limited to the territory where there is abundance of water and where annuals grow every year. They encamp on the edge of the desert and are therefore known as *ruḥûm eḍ-ḍîre*, relatives of the (people of the) settled country; they do not undertake extensive raids, *ġazw*, and they acknowledge the supremacy of various Bedouins, to whom they pay a tax for protection, *ḫâwa*. The Bedouins are Arabs who breed camels exclusively, or at least in the main, and for ten months dwell in the interior of the desert, *jeḥarreżûn*. At the end of June they go to the edge of the desert, *jeġarrebûn*, dwell among the settlers until the middle of August or the beginning of September, provide themselves with grain, clothing, and weapons, and then return to the desert again.

On the edge of the desert a constant increase or decrease of the population can be observed. If the government guarantees complete security of life and property to the inhabitants of the towns and villages, the herdsmen of goats and sheep are transformed into active farmers; on all sides they build cottages, hamlets come into existence, and the *rwʿw* and *ḥwâja* become peaceful settlers. They entrust their goats and sheep to the care of various clans of Bedouins, who do not go back to the open desert but remain on the border between villages and settlements and are themselves transformed into *ḥwâja*. If there is no strong government in the populated regions, security of life and property disappears and there follows a decrease of population. The permanent house is exchanged for the moveable tent; the farmers become *ḥwâja*. The former settlers, however, never become real Bedouins, because the actual Bedouins will never acknowledge them as equals. The term Bedouin is, hence, much narrower than the term Arab. In the view of the Rwala not all inhabitants of the Arabian peninsula are actually Arabs. Only those are Arabs who dwell in movable tents. Not all the Arabs, however, are Bedouins, but only those who spend the greater part of the year in the interior of the desert and who breed mostly camels. The Rwala are recognized by all tribes as being true and pure Bedouins. They are *beʿîdîn eṣ-ṣaʿwa wâsʿîn eḍ-ḍaʿana*, they have very extensive territories and drive their enemies far away from their camps. They are *ahl es-swâd w-el-ʿwâd*, warriors on horseback, for they are able both to wield the spear and to manage horses.

1 [The ḥwâja -- Analyst]

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5. *'al-esrija telḳaṭ lahalka 'arûbi*
w-ḥoms w-ḥama laha mebi' w-meśrâ.

1. O Mehsen, at your wish the Welde have deprived me
Of this bliss to which a broad passage leads.
2. I sent a messenger, but he did not carry out my bidding,
Brought no refreshing news, nor returned at all.
3. O Lord, withhold gain from a heedless liar,
Who takes messages but delivers them not to those
for whom they are destined!
4. I could not eat even if they laid before me, on rice
boiled in sour milk,
Pieces of warm roast from this year's lamb.
5. At Esrija she used to gather fuel for her kins[illegible]le,
And Ḥoms and Ḥama' were her market towns.

The poet hailed from the as-Sba'a tribe. He loved a daughter of Mehsen Raḥiṣarrûḥ, the chief of the 'Ebede, who refused her to the poet and sent her to his sister, who was married to a chief of the Welde encamped on the left bank of the Euphrates. The poet camped with his Ḳmuṣa division of the Sba'a west of Palmyra, longing in vain to meet again his sweetheart. I took down his poem as it was recited to me by my companion, Blejhân eben Meṣreb.

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Verse 1. A *ṭenijje* (pl., *ṭenâja'*) is a passage between two rows of tents. The clans engaged chiefly in breeding goats and sheep arrange their tents in the form of an ellipse. The side ropes of the different tents meet, only two wide openings, by which the camp is entered, being left on the two narrow sides of the ellipse. In contrast to this, the Rwala, who breed only camels, usually put up their tents in parallel lines. The space from end to end between these tents is also called *ṭenijje*. The wider such an opening or space, the more room for the guests; hence the saying *wasi' ṭenâjâh* has the same meaning as *bâleh wasi'* or *ḥalkeh wasi'*, his heart, his nature, his solicitude is wide, he is generous. *Ḥzûz* are expressions of bliss or love, *ḥazz*. 2. *Kazzejt* has the same meaning as *be'aṭt*; *nowbi* (or *nebâi*), my commission. *'Elem* is a detailed report, a long message. 3. *Ḥaṭât* or *ḥaṭwa* means many a one, someone, or anyone. *Melfa'* is the person for whom the message is intended. *Melfâk 'ala flân* means "thou wilt go to this or that one"; *min hw melfâh*, "to whom shall I deliver this?" 4. *Śetei* or *tummen* is the rice grown on the lower Euphrates and Tigris.

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cient military ability, or is ailing, or too old. Sometimes the chief's son or one of his relatives is entrusted with the command. But any Bedouin conspicuous for his prudence and bravery in time of war may be promoted from leader of the men on foot to leader of mounted men and may even be recognized as the commander-in-chief. The chief generally tries to gain his favor, marries his daughter to him, and adopts him into his kin, but likewise may bring about his death on finding that the commander does not wish him well. For a leader who rises in such a manner usually deposes the reigning kin and becomes chief himself. Therefore the members of the reigning kin are very careful when choosing a chief and recognize only the most distinguished of their kin. This is also the reason why the dignity of a chief does not pass from father to son as a matter of course.

The commander of the smaller expeditions gives notice to his friends: "We intend to start on foot — or on horseback — on a raid, *wabri nehanŭel* or *we'ajjer*." When some men have declared their willingness to participate, he says to them:

"We shall go when the sign is favorable, *nimedd bel-waghet az-zĕne*, either on Monday or Thursday."

For the small expeditions dark nights are the most suitable, *lejâl aẓ-ẓulma' zĕne lil-ma'âjir w-al-ḥanŭel*. But by far the best is the *lejlet as-sarra*, the last night of the lunar month, when the moon does not appear at all, "as he is then staying with the sun." On clear nights, *lejâl al-ḳamra*, small expeditions are never undertaken. Among the seasons of the year the cold period is the most favorable, as there is not so much danger from thirst, which is greatly feared. On the whole, both small and large expeditions are made preferably in the time of abundance, *rabi'*, when edible plants, good pasture, and plenty of water may be found anywhere. This is the time when the inner desert swarms with raiders of every description.

Preparations for a Large Raid

Whenever the commander intends to undertake a large raid, *jimedd razzâj*, he announces it to the chiefs in substantially these words: "Behold! we wish to go on a large raid under the leadership of the All-Highest. Shoe your horses and prepare supplies for yourselves, *chdû ḥejlkom w-wazzenû zehâbkom*. Behold! ye will assemble at the appointed place on